

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ARE NOT THERE?

This past winter I learned one of those “life lessons.” No matter what age, condition or security systems your home has, you can experience a disaster.

It was very cold for a very long time this past January. As I was at our home caring for our son’s dog while he was on vacation, Amelia S. and I went out in our backyard to run and play for a while. As we ran from one side of the yard to the other, I looked over and discovered a great wall of ice forming on the lower back wall of my neighbors’ home. These neighbors are ‘snowbirds’ and winter in the Naples area of Florida. I do not have their contact information but suspected the neighbor, Pam, on their other side did. So I called Pam and told her what I saw-she looked out her window and immediately called our shared neighbor “snowbirds” in Florida. It turns out, a pipe burst in a second floor bathroom and sent water down the back of the house, puddling around the walkout level patio door. The snowbirds sent an emissary to look over the house and he immediately called the owner to tell him to ‘get here as fast as you can. You’ve got a big problem!’”

It has been almost FOUR months and the ServPro Trucks have been over there regularly, as well as plumbers, electricians, drywallers and cleaners. It will be almost a new house when all is said and done, but when they eventually sell their home, they will have to note that damage on their home’s Truth in Housing statement.

Here at the lake, a lot of us are not here year round and never think about the “what ifs” that could happen. As I thought about this, I realized we all need a plan for when something catastrophic like this hap-

pens to us! But first, how could it be prevented?

One way would be to hire someone to look in on your home occasionally. There are local companies here in Balsam Lake that will do this service for you. In our BLHA 2009-2010 Directory, I found three companies listed: Balsam’s Lakeside Landscaping - Greg and Brenda Strilzuk (715-825-2202 or www.BalsamLakesideLandscaping.com), Home Maintenance Services - Gary Hansen (715-485-3531) and Lake Services Unlimited Landscape and Maintenance - Jonzy’s Market (www.lakeservicesunlimited.com). And our new advertisers: Cabin Watch - Peter Ward (715-483-0083 or www.wardscabinwatch.com), K & J’s Complete Cabin Care - Jim or Kris (715-768-0475 or 715-768-0355) So, here are some choices of local companies who will check the outside, the inside, plow your snow or whatever you would contract them to do.

Another way to help protect your lake property would be with a security system. Infrared motion alarms would let you know if you’ve been broken into, and the monitoring company would give you a call alerting you to this. To avert a disaster like my neighbors experienced, you could install heat and water sensors in key areas of the house. I am not computer literate, but have been told it is easy to have these installed and then just set up the alerts to go to your computer or over your phone lines. By searching for ‘Remote Monitoring Systems’ on your web browser, you will find several companies you can call and get quotes from. Some simple and some complicated ways to prevent a water disaster from ruining your sacred time at the lake.



IN THE WINTER, THIS IS PRETTY!



THIS IS NOT PRETTY!

The Local Realty GLEE Finale

Submitted by Steve Figmiller

OK, so local Realtors and Sellers are not quite as happy as Finn and Rachael were after the performance of their "Journey" set last night on GLEE – but we are glad about the turnaround in buyer activity in our local lake home market.

Nationally:

- New Research from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) shows vacation home sales in the US. rose 7.9% to 553,000 in 2009. Although well off the peak of 1,067,000 sales in 2006, this represents the first time in 3 years the U.S. Vacation home market has seen a lift.

- Also according to NAR, 38% of the vacation home sales are foreclosures or short sales. Most of those distressed sales are in Florida, Arizona and California.

- HomeAway (a national owner assisted rental company) has just released its annual survey of its clients and reports that on average its clients collect about \$35,000.00 per year and rent out their vacation homes about 20 weeks per year. Remember, these rental homes are locat-

ed primarily in the south and are rented in the winter to northerners.

Locally:

- On Balsam and nearby lakes, showing activity has increased over last year and Brokers are seeing an increase in Purchase Agreements written. Fortunately our local shoreline market has not seen the large number of foreclosures or short sales that other markets have struggled with. Also, we have not seen a great amount of rental of private homes on our lakes.

Recently, buyers have been more serious about actually purchasing a cabin rather than just looking. Many of them are all cash and are not relying on borrowing on equity of their primary residences as in the recent past. Buyers are taking advantage of the bargains in the market.

Balsam Lake did have its highest sale price recorded in May. The majority of the showing activity is in the \$225,000 to \$375,000 range.

There is a great supply of well priced homes available to show. Conventional mortgages are readily available and interest rates are at 50 year lows. Blue skies ahead!
